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10 ORIENTATION--information especially likely to be needed by users of a file as a frame of reference for understanding the materials classified elsewhere; organization of the file, special coding decisions, and evaluation of the file.

[GUIDE TO THE NF6 BLACKFOOT II FILE]

[The Blackfoot of the United States and Canada were aboriginally made up of three geographical-linguistic groups. These groups were the Siksika (Northern Blackfoot), the Kainah (Blood), and the Pikuni or Piegan. The three groups as a whole are also referred to as the Siksika (Blackfoot), a term which probably derived from the discoloration of moccasins with ashes (Mooney 1910: 570). The term Kainah means Many Chiefs and the term Piegan refers to people who had torn robes (8: Ewers, pp. 5-6). Although the three groups are sometimes called a confederacy, their political structure does not warrant such a term. The Blackfoot had an ambiguous sense of unity. They gathered together primarily for ceremonial purposes. The Blackfoot language is Algonquian and it is on a coordinate level with Arapaho and Cheyenne. Dialects of Blackfoot are Siksika, Blood and Peigan (Voegelin and Voegelin 1977: 14-15).

Before the Blackfoot were placed on reservations in the latter half of the nineteenth century, they occupied a large territory which stretched from the North Saskatchewan River in Canada to the Missouri River in Montana, and from longitude 105° W. to the base of the Rocky Mountains. The Plains Cree were located to the north, the Assiniboin to the east, and the Crow to the south of the

Blackfoot (16: Hanks and Hanks, p. 5). The Piegan were located toward the western part of this territory, in the mountainous country. The Blood were located to the northeast of the Piegan, and the Northern Blackfoot were northeast of the Blood.

The Blackfoot now occupy four reservations. The Blackfoot Agency (Northern Blackfoot), the Blood Agency, and the Peigan Agency (Northern Piegan) are all located in Alberta, Canada. The Blackfeet Reservation in Montana is inhabited by the Southern Piegan. See Category 102 for maps of the aboriginal territory and the location of the reservations.

Mooney accepts the estimate of Mackenzie that in 1790 there were approximately 9,000 Blackfoot. According to Ewers, however, in 1832 Catlin estimated that the Blackfoot numbered 16,500, and in 1833 Prince Maximilian estimated that there were 18,000 to 20,000 (8: Ewers, p. 60). During the nineteenth century, starvation and repeated epidemics of smallpox and measles so decimated the population that by 1909 the Blackfoot numbered only 4,635 (Mooney 1910: 571). Evidence indicates that the Piegan were always the largest of the three groups. In 1970 in Montana the Blackfoot population was 12,200, with 6,400 on the Blackfeet Reservation and 5,800 living off the reservation (13: Robbins, p. 48).

Horses, guns, metal, and smallpox were probably present among the Blackfoot early in the eighteenth century, although they did not see a White man until the

latter part of that century. The introduction of horses and guns produced a period of cultural efflorescence among the Blackfoot. They were one of the most aggressive groups on the North American Plains by the mid-nineteenth century. They were allied with the Sarsi and the Gros Ventres (9: Ewers, p. 171). The United States government defined Blackfoot territory and promised provisions and instructions in the Judith Treaty of 1855. The westward movement of White settlers in the following decade engendered bitter conflicts with the Blackfoot. By 1870 the Blackfoot had been conquered and their population weakened by smallpox. The buffalo had become virtually extinct by the winter of 1883-1884, and by 1885 the Southern Piegan had settled on the Blackfeet Reservation (14: McFee, pp. 47-48).

The Canadian government signed a treaty with the Blackfoot in 1877 (10: Lewis, pp. 66-67). The three reserves were established some time later and they are under jurisdiction of the Canadian Indian Department (55: Fisher, p. 18).

The Blackfoot were the typical, perhaps even the classic example of the Plains Indians in many aspects of their culture. They were nomadic hunter-gatherers who lived in tipis. The buffalo was the mainstay of their economy, if not the focus of the entire culture. They hunted other large mammals and

gathered vegetable foods. Traditions indicate that the buffalo were hunted in drives, although hunting practices changed when horses and guns were introduced. Deer and smaller game were caught with snares. Fish, although abundant, were eaten only in times of dire necessity and after the disappearance of the buffalo.

During the summer, the Blackfoot lived in large tribal camps. It was during this season that they hunted buffalo and engaged in ceremonialism, such as the Sun Dance. During the winter they separated into bands of from approximately 10 to 20 lodges (8: Ewers, p. 39). Band membership was quite fluid There might be several headmen in each band, and one of them was considered the chief. Headmanship was very informal. The qualifications for office were wealth, success in war, and ceremonial experience. Authority within the band was similar to the relationship between landlord and tenant. As long as the headman continued to provide benefits, people remained with him. But if his generosity slackened, people would simple pack up and leave (12: Hanks and Richardson, p. 3).

For each of the three geographical-linguistic groups, the Blood, the Piegan, and the Northern Blackfoot, there was a head chief. His office was slightly more formalized than that of the band headman. The primary function of the chief was to call councils to discuss affairs of interest to the group as a whole.

When bands congregated during the summer, they formed distinct camps, which were separated by a stream or some natural boundary when available. When the Piegan, Blood, and Northern Blackfoot joined together for ceremonial purposes, each one of the three camped in a circle.

According to Hanks and Richardson (Source 12, pp. 3, 20), the aboriginal kinship and social systems were characterized by "anarchistic individualism". They describe the kinship system as "multilineal" and "multilocal", and they speak in terms of a balance of lines with a very slight tendency toward patrilineality. The most basic social unit was the "orientation group", which consisted of the household of ego's parents and ego's household as an adult with a family (12: Hanks and Richardson, p. 4). Polygyny was practiced and, in fact, was the general rule.

In the late 1960's the economy at Blackfeet Reservation, Montana, was based on ranching, farming, wage labor, welfare, and leased land income (13: Robbins, p. 162; 14: McFee, pp. 28-29). There was potential for oil and natural gas production and for lumbering (14: McFee, p. 29). Poverty was prevalent with the more acculturated doing better economically than the less acculturated as a general rule (14: McFee, p. 104). Describing the Blackfeet at the same period, Robbins (Source 13, p. 160) refers to them as an "underclass" and their economic polition as "neo-colonial".

Family relationships and structure remained amorphous, unstable, and fluid in the late 1960's. Robbins, at Blackfeet Reservation, associated the formation of large households made up of related families and the tendency for related families to live near each other to the scarcity of economic resources. These groups of relatives formed cooperative economic units (13: Robbins, pp. 160-161). Hanks and Hanks found generally similar conditions at Northern Blackfoot Reserve ca. 1940. They reported that independent households occurred only under conditions of financial security (16: Hanks and Hanks, p. 161). Marriages seem to be unstable according to all reports and matrifocal and patrifocal extended families have become more common since the early twentieth century (13: Robbins, pp. 163-164).

The Blackfeet Reservation is a business corporation and a political entity. The constitution and corporate charter were approved in 1935. All members of the tribe are shareholders in the corporation. The tribe and the corporation are directed by a nine member tribal council (6: McFee, p. 29).

Like other Plains Indian cultures, the Blackfoot aboriginally had age-graded men's societies. Prince Maximilian counted seven of these societies in 1833. The first one in the series was the Mosquito society, and the last one was the Bull society. Membership was purchased. Each society had its own distinctive

songs, dances, and regalia, and their responsibilities included keeping order in the camp. There was one women's society (8: Ewers, p. 61).

Aboriginally, the religious life of the Blackfoot centered upon medicine bundles, and there were more than 50 of them among the three main Blackfoot groups (8: Ewers, p. 165). The most important bundles to the group as a whole were the beaver bundles, the medicine pipe bundles, and the Sun Dance bundle.

Since the Sun Dance bundle was not mentioned by the eighteenth-century explorers, Ewers feels that it was an early nineteenth-century innovation among the Blackfoot (8: Ewers, p. 174). By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Sun Dance had become an important ceremony. It was performed once each year during the summer. The Sun Dance among the Blackfoot was generally similar to the ceremony that was performed in other Plains cultures. There were some differences, in that a woman played the leading role among the Blackfoot, and the symbolism and paraphernalia used were derived from beaver bundle ceremonialism. The Blackfoot Sun Dance included the following: (1) moving the camp on four successive days; (2) on the fifth day, building the medicine lodge, transferring bundles to the medicine woman, and offering of gifts by children and adults in ill health; (3) on the sixth day, dancing toward the sun, blowing eagle-bone whistles, and self-torture; and (4) on the remaining four days, performing various ceremonies of the men's societies (8: Ewers, pp. 174-175).

Christianity is practiced now by most Southern Piegan with Roman Catholicism predominating (14: McFee, pp. 65-66). The Blackfoot apparently never adopted the Ghost Dance nor is the Peyote Cult present (18: Wissler, p. 436; 6: McFee, p. 114). The Sun Dance and other native religious ceremonies are still practiced among most of the Blackfoot groups. There are detailed descriptions of a Sun Dance, a Pipe Bundle opening, and a Medicine Pipe Transfer Ceremony performed among the Blood ca. 1972 in 21: Hungry Wolf.

The file is an addition to and an update of the NF6 Blackfoot I file and researchers are strongly urged to consult both files. There are four sources in the Blackfoot I file and 54 sources in the Blackfoot II file for a total of 58 sources. The area focus for both files is on the Southern Piegan at Blackfeet Reservation, Montana.

The Blackfoot I file contains three sources by Clark Wissler, the noted anthropologist who was associated with the American Museum of Natural History. Wissler's informant, interpreter, and, to a large extent, coauthor was David C. Duvall, a Montana Piegan. Duvall collected a great deal of the data during the years 1903-1911, with Wissler making sporadic visits to the field. Wissler's main interest was in the Blackfoot prior to the reservation period, so these sources consist basically of "memory ethnography" and cover the time period of

the entire nineteenth century. 1: Wissler is on political and social structure, 2: Wissler is on medicine bundles and their ceremonies, and 3: Wissler is on material culture. Source 4: McClintock is a narrative of the experiences of the author who lived with the Blackfoot for four years, from 1896-1900.

The 54 sources in the Blackfoot II file also concentrate on the pre-reservation Blackfoot, either through memory ethnography or historical reconstruction. The most notable of these sources are by John Ewers and Clark Wissler. 8: Ewers is a general ethnography, 9: Ewers is a study of the horse and its importance in Blackfoot culture, 15: Ewers is an historical account of the boundaries of the Blackfoot and the Gros Ventres, 25: Ewers is on pipes and pipemaking, 37: Ewers is on a painting, 39: Ewers is on Sun Dance self-torture, 41: Ewers is on crafts, and 43: Ewers is on traditional means of measuring. 18: Wissler is on the age-grade societies and dance associations, 22: Wissler and Duvall is on mythology, and 23: Wissler is on the Sun Dance. Myths, stories, and reminiscences are contained in 5: Grinnell, 24: Schultz, 34: and 35: Michelson, 44: Holterman, 52: and 53: Uhlenbeck, and to some extent, 20: and 21: Hungry Wolf. 50: Uhlenbeck and 51: Uhlenbeck & van Gulik are a grammar and a vocabulary, respectively. Other sources on the nineteenth century Blackfoot are 10: Lewis, 27: Dempsey, 38: Doty, 47: Kane, 54: Lancaster, and 56: Maximilian.

There are a few sources which deal with the Blackfoot living in Canada and they concentrate on the period ca. 1940-1950. 11: Goldfrank documents changes since the Blood were confined to a reservation. 12: Hanks and Richardson deals with Northern Blackfoot kinship and 16: Hanks and Hanks is on the Northern Blackfoot trust fund. 28: Goldfrank is a psychological study of myths and the father image in Blood society. 29: Lismer is on Blood adopted practices and 36: Dempsey is on contemporary social dancing and singing ceremonies.

Finally, there are a number of sources which were done ca. 1960-1970 which provide some fairly recent data on the Blackfoot. 6: and 14: McFee deal with differences in acculturation among the Southern Piegan. 13: Robbins is on household composition and inter-household economic cooperation. 7: United States is on nutritional adequacy of the diet of the Southern Piegan. 17: Hellson and Gadd is on ethnobotany. 20: and 21: Hungry Wolf contains some information on contempory life, especially on the life-style of re-ethnicized Bloods, as well as memory ethnography. Other sources deal briefly with a variety of subjects.

The Blackfoot files cover a comprehensive range of subjects and should be useful for many research purposes. A number of marking decisions have been made for this file. Medicine bundles and smudge altars have been marked for Category 778, discussions of "gentes" have been marked for 614, and the calumet,

a peacepipe used in maintaining peace and sealing contracts, has been marked for 728.]

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Marlene Martin
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